

Hundreds flock to Caledon Equestrian Park for Wines of the World

Written By KIRA WRONSKA DORWARD

It was a perfect start to summer in Caledon on Friday, June 7 at Palgrave Rotary's annual Wines of the World in the Caledon Equestrian Park.

The weather was in harmony with the high spirits of the occasion, as around 800 Caledon residents and guests gathered under the three great marquees to enjoy food and, more importantly, drink brought in from around the globe.

It made for a comfortable and pleasant evening as table upon table lined the back of the white marquee tents, showcasing wines of all grapes and vintages, from Prince Edward County to Australia. Catering was provided by Lavender Blue, and food donations were also supplied by Garden Foods, Foodland, and the Bolton Seniors Centre. Entertainment was provided by Palgrave singer Jessica Sole and her band.

"To me this is a great community event," said Mayor Allan Thompson. "It promotes a lot of local charities as well as local [drinks], like Pommies and Caledon Hills. What's amazing is that every dollar and cent that's raised here goes right back into the community to help seniors and kids programs, and that's one thing about the service clubs here in Caledon: all the money raised goes back to the community. Caledon would not be what it is today without it."

Speaking of Pommies, Nick Sutcliffe, Founder of the family owned and operated cidery in Bolton, was present to dispense three of his local brews: the Original cider, Farmhouse, and a Sangria mix for summer.

"Wines of the World is one of our favorite events of the year. It's right in our back yard, so year over year we have a great time serving Pommies to, and chatting with, many of our friends and neighbours. Community is everything to Lindsay and I and Wines of the World is where our community gets together for a drink," Sutcliffe says.

Another local entrepreneur in the drinks (though not alcohol business) named Shawna MacFayden was present at the Rotary camper to give people a healthy dose of a product she developed right here in Caledon, Jun- a probiotic tonic similar to Kambucha.

A fermented health beverage that is made from green tea and honey and SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast), the local mother-daughter team behind Jun and Country Brew was included in this year's event as a healthy alternative for those who may not be drinking, or who may want to improve their gut health.

Although the producers are local, the training and our SCOBY comes all the way from Lake Atitlan, Guatemala where sister/daughter Michelle has a very successful probiotic company, Love Probiotics. Tapping into Michelle's ten years of fermentation experience, the MacFaydens have created their own unique blends and flavours.

From its conception, Wines of the World was an event designed by Palgrave Rotary members to serve the dual purpose of raising funds while bringing the community together for a fun and classy event.

Former Rotary member Fionna Ferguson recalls how Wines of the World was conceived twenty years ago.

"A few of us went to Nobleton because the Chamber of Commerce had a wine expo, and we thought, wouldn't it be a lovely thing to do for Rotary Club?" she said.

The first year of the event saw only 100 attendees in the small Rotary Clubhouse, but over the subsequent few years it became so successful that the number increased twelve-fold.

?In that time,? continues Ferguson, ?we've had tents blown over, we've had torrential rain, people passing out from the heat?now it's officially become known as Palgrave's start to the summer.?

Even those outside of the small town of Palgrave know it as their annual summer kick-off. Mark Prieur of Caledon East sits enjoying a glass of Caledon Hills, and speaks to how he and his wife ?come here to support the community because it's a fantastic time. People come from the 416 to get away from all that, what better place to live and have your kids grow up than in this community? I don't work in Caledon, so it's a way to stay connected. So many people just give in this community and expect nothing in return, so we like to support the local business[es].?

The nineteen wine tables featured seven sponsored tables, hosted by charities including CCS, CPL, Caledon Meals on Wheels, Caledon Parent-Child Centre, Bethell Hospice, and the Rotary Club.

?That's a really good program for us,? said Rotary President and WoW organizer Jim Firth. ?A lot of really good sponsors, and to let the charity host the table (and then the charity gets to explain what they do), that's a real win-win for us.?

Speaking more about the event, Firth continued, ?I think it really does bring people out and bring people together, and it's unique. There are lots of craft beer fests, but this is unique as a wine event. It's a fun event to put on, and I think a great community builder, and I quite enjoy it.?

As for the 35 Rotary volunteers and the work they and Firth have put into this even over the years, and looking to the future, Firth continued ?it's an honour to be the President [of Palgrave Rotary] for two terms, and see all the good we've done in the community. We encourage anyone to come out for a meeting and see what we're all about.?